



VBMA 2024-2025 Circle Steering Committee members (left to right) Anne Golensky, Mary Wright, Stuart Weismiller, Trudy Powers Hoffman, Lori Lazorik, Susan Von Hagen, June Fitzgerald, Jean Spaulding Kjellman Diane McGinn, and Joy Ann Coll.

## The Circle helps Vero Beach Museum of Art maintain, expand outreach programs

PreK at the VBMA is one of many free programs The Circle has funded since its inception in 2009. Through yearly dues and generous gifts from members, The Circle has helped the Vero Beach Museum of Art to maintain and expand outreach programs that truly enrich the lives of residents of all ages in the local community.

The vision for PreK at the VBMA, a program for the youngest learners, nearly came to fruition in 2019. Sara Klein, VBMA Director of Education, collaborated with the School District of Indian River County, but unfortunately, the project derailed as the COVID pandemic advanced. One generous Circle donor stepped up anonymously with \$13,000 to fund PreK for the 2023 year. Later, another passionate group of Circle members donated to help fund the 2024 program, a critical advancement given that the program was not selected for funding by the full membership. Thanks to them, the program is now fully realized.



PreK at the VBMA Program Observation Committee members (left to right) Laura Moss, Suzi McCoy Shriner, Serena Kratz, and Barb Dorvee.

The VBMA welcomed 360 students, teachers, and chaperones last fall. Sara explains the inspiration: “Throughout my career, I have always been passionate about early learning and art museums and how to connect the two. Fortunately, Brooke and Jill at the School District are wonderful partners and were instrumental in making this happen...our littlest student visitors feel welcome and comfortable in the VBMA galleries and studios.”

PreK at the VBMA serves all seven Indian River County Title 1 elementary schools that offer PreK classes. There is no cost to the school or the students, and transportation reimbursement for bussing is included. One teacher responded, “None of my students has ever been to a museum before. I know they will be back because you made it interesting and fun and everything was on their level.”

PreK at the VBMA prepares young learners for their museum visit. VBMA educators visit the classrooms where students learn museum vocabulary, see photographs of key areas within the



JoAnn Tomczak with VBMA Circle Steering Committee Chair Trudy Powers Hoffman and Circle member Marilyn Bosland at the April 11 season closing reception.

museum, and preview images of artworks they will see on their tours. Studio art projects are designed to relate to the gallery experience, and each student takes home an Art Kit with a “Family Pass” for families to return to the VBMA together, free of charge.

Trudy Powers Hoffman, Chair of The Circle, sums it up: “This is what makes The Circle so special—our members are passionate about art and believe in enhancing lives through art for all in Indian River County.”